

MARCH 2010
www.soroptimistinternational.org

TIS



The International Soroptimist

**WELCOME
TO THE NEW
DIGITAL
TIS!**

Trafficking: Soroptimists take action
CSW 54: Commission for the Status of Women
Project Sierra Study Tour
Partnering for successful projects

a global voice
for women

Soroptimist International



Welcome to a New TIS,
As International President I welcome the new TIS as our source of information of what goes on in Soroptimism at SI level.

I know that some members might prefer still to have the magazine in hard copy, but we feel that it is time to change and I hope that this digital format will attract more new readers, as it can easily be translated into the local language by Google. It will make it easier to read for those members who don't have the official language as their mother tongue.

New thoughts and discussions at SI Level

At SI level we are in a period of transition and major changes. At our recent SI meeting in Heathrow in February we discussed how we can make a more visible and progressive structure for SI, so that members don't feel distanced from what is going on

at SI level. We want the members to have increased awareness of and find themselves as ambassadors of an international organisation, which is working to improve the lives of women and girls.

To be more visible and united as an International organisation, amongst many topics we discussed:

- 1) a Strategic Plan for SI to define our vision, mission and goals,

combined with strategies and a work plan to achieve our objectives
2) a new structure for SI, with a proposal that Officers also get a vote at board meetings

3) a strengthening of the links between Federations

4) two proposals for the Long-term-Project, which will be sent to all Clubs in April for voting on the final theme

5) a new corporate identity for

SI – including modernising our webpages, logo and strapline
6) a more transparent way of communicating the work going on in UN centres.

We hope that members at all levels will support the changes, which all will be launched at the Convention in Montréal 10-14 July 2011.

I hope to see many of you there, so please start your planning for a wonderful visit to Canada in July 2011.

Let us work together on projects for empowering women and girls.

Let us build networks and friendship.

Let us make Soroptimist International more visible!

Let us remember: Action Speaks Louder than Words!

Warmest regards to you all

Hanne Jensbo

President's update



Study Tours & Friendship Links

In my recent study tour to India, with SIGBI President Jackie Mosedale, 13 Dutch and 12 Danish Soroptimists, I realised that, in India, with just 14 Clubs in such a huge country, it can be difficult to understand the international aspect of our organisation. All 14 Clubs have many social projects and devote their time, money and energy to help those who need it in their societies, right outside their own back door; they deserve more promotion of their good work!

How can we help them to understand that they have Soroptimist sisters all over the world, with whom they can share their thoughts and projects and who even might be able to support them with money for their projects?

There is no doubt that personal contact with other Clubs and members is the best way to make them feel like members of an international network.

I therefore propose that many more study tours should be organised, not only to visit Indian Clubs, but to establish more contacts between Clubs in all corners of the world.

I also hope that you and your Club will look for new friendship Clubs, not only in your neighbouring country, but in places where personal and economic support is more useful to Soroptimists than just a Christmas card.

Hanne Jensbo

Soroptimist diversity

One of the top issues for general discussions at the moment is DIVERSITY.

I am convinced that you will not find a more diverse organisation than SI! I find that our diversity is reflected:

- 1) in the ways that Clubs recruit their members,
- 2) in the large variety of projects at all levels,
- 3) in the different cultural and historical backgrounds of our 3000 Clubs,
- 4) in the reported improvements to the lives of women and girls,
- 5) in the way in which we cooperate with other NGOs and Government Institutions,
- 6) in the way that we make friendships and network between women.

If those very diverse aspects of our organisation are made more known, I feel sure that we will attract more members and also be more attractive to younger women, so please let us unite in making our diversities visible and let us be proud of being a SOROPTIMIST. Let us promote all our Clubs in SI as the place where you are inspired, find friendship and network, and where you can promote projects for empowering women and girls.



COVER PICTURE:
**SI belongs to
 Stop the Traffik,
 a global movement that
 says 'people shouldn't be
 bought and sold'**

From the editor

Well, here is the new version of The International Soroptimist – or TIS for brevity and simplicity. I hope you like it. It is different; it is 'digital' but it is, therefore, now accessible to every single person in the world who has access to a computer.

How amazing is that? Anyone, anywhere in the world that you meet, email, phone or write to can, pretty well instantly, access this magazine.

This means that anyone, anywhere can access Soroptimism, 365:24/7. Yes, of course, they already can, with all our websites that federations, unions, national associations, networks and clubs work so hard on.

The point of TIS, as I see it, is to provide a bridge between the traditional printed magazine (expensive to print and post) and the SI website that is a rapid information resource, rather than a 'good read'.

Equally, TIS is a friendly publication that can be printed off, emailed, used as a tool to demonstrate just how powerful and compelling global Soroptimism is.

After six years as editor of SIGBI's magazine (and still going strong!) I have learnt so much about Soroptimism and the range of projects successfully undertaken by members; but I am still impressed by every email I receive; they all show that Soroptimists are making a difference.

Now, with TIS, I am in touch with all members across the globe, 125 countries, 3000 clubs, over 90,000 members. I am privileged, excited and eager to hear more.

So, thank you all for giving me the opportunity to publish TIS, thank you to SI HQ and the editorial panel for helping me to get this first issue ready, thank you to everyone who contributed to it.

There will be another issue in June, deadline 21 May, to which you are all very welcome to contribute news and information that is relevant to the international scope of TIS.

We have much to report on; please help us to get the balance right. Send me your views and suggestions now.

Dates to remember

12-14 March: SIA Board of Directors Meeting, Philadelphia, USA

13 April: SISWP Officers Meeting

16-18 April: SISWP Conference of Clubs at the Gold Coast Qld, Australia

10 - 14 July 2011: Soroptimist International Convention Montréal, Québec, Canada.

Following the resounding success of the 18th SI Convention held in Glasgow in 2007, planning is already well underway for 2011. Further information will be posted on to the Montréal Convention website as it becomes available at www.si-convention.org.

You may also e-mail Yvonne Machuk, Convention Chair at: convention.chair@soroptimistinternational.org



What is Soroptimist International?

Soroptimist International, a worldwide organisation for women in management and the professions, is a global voice for women through Awareness, Advocacy and Action.

Our Vision

Soroptimist International is a vibrant, dynamic organisation for today's professional and business women. We are committed to a world where women and girls together achieve their individual and collective potential, realise aspirations and have an equal voice in creating strong, peaceful communities worldwide.

Our Mission

Soroptimists inspire action and create opportunities to transform the lives of women and girls through a global network of members and international partnerships.

Soroptimist International A global voice for women

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 Simply email: editor@soroptimistinternational.org and you will receive your very own digital magazine each quarter, free of charge!

a global voice
 for women

Soroptimist  International



The Great Tent: CSW54



**Dawn Marie Lemonds,
International Programme
Director, reports on the 54th
Commission for the Status of
Women held in New York**

Eight days at CSW and the Global Forum... how to describe it? It finally came to me - the Great Tent! I was sitting in overflow Room 2 when the translation for the room was accidentally put into Chinese instead of English.

The room, buzzing with discontent, reminded me of the tents I sat in 15 years ago in Huiroa, China; rain spattering on the tent, mud seeping through the seams, and yet we all sat there eager to learn, understand, and share our thoughts on issues in The Big Tent Of Women's Issues. Now, 15 years later, the BIG TENT continues, the most marvellous annual experience called CSW where thousands of

women converged once again to learn, share, and shake up the government delegations on critical issues.

The women's emotions are the same - eagerness, frustration, intensity, compassion and anger, each pursuing the dream of women achieving peace, opportunity and an equal share of the planet. The tent is also a good metaphor in that the work is not easy, the paths through the halls of communication are not always clear, yet women still come and focus on the work needed for our world.

I noted an increasing number of women in the government delegations, a much greater attendance of young women who are finding their voice, and

more empowered women from Africa. More women are now in positions of power across the world and more girls get primary education.

Each CSW has its own challenges, CSW 54- Beijing +15 was no different; there is so much to report. The SI website and www.beijing15.org website have more highlights.

I bring home a sense of community and commitment. I bring pride in SI's high profile; our largest ever delegation of Soroptimists presented more workshops than ever and have been invited to give a verbal "intervention" at a high level government panel. I bring the reality that Soroptimists received a great deal of attention for the

practical, accessible work that our members do locally and globally, particularly in the area of human trafficking.

We have heard so many times that we are an organisation that does the work - not just talks about it. Finally, I bring increased commitment to the importance of wisely choosing work that matters, and measuring the impact of what we do rather than just the output given. I bring back energy; the faces, voices and stories of women and girls, from my neighbourhood and in lands far from me, that need our vital work and voice.

We must take global *action* for women as well as being the global *voice* for women.

"We are not invitees to this planet. We are participants." Our job is to participate. What issues involving gender equity are you passionate about? Can you change it, fix it, or advocate for it?"



SI delegation braves the New York chill

One remarkable performance was by children from 4 to 18, each quoting famous and provocative lines from Mohammed, the Bible, Oprah Winfrey, Will Smith, Buddhism, Martin Luther King, Shakespeare and more. Then songs from past decades until today, showing the changing 'face' of women from insipid 'airheads' in South Pacific's "I enjoy being a girl" to a 15 year old's rousing rendition of Aretha Franklin's R-E-S-P-E-C-T! The Children's Theatre Workshop and their rousing performance, ending with 'One World', captivated our hearts!

"We have come a long way, we are not there yet but we know where we are going and we know how to get there" Liz Law on peace in Northern Ireland



SI President Hanne & friends at CSW

A riveting presentation represented critical issues for women in the six regions of the world - Asia and the Pacific, Europe, Middle East and Arab Region, North America, Africa, and Latin America/Caribbean. Each showed that we are all women but we do not all have the same issues of urgency; in the Middle East, their issues are fundamental, women want to be recognised as human, in Africa, women are viewed as human and advances have been made in education and empowerment - but poverty, violence and health are issues of monumental import. After the session, Regional Teams met and identified their critical issues, and discussed strategies. These will be brought by NGOs to the Caucuses and meetings with their missions and delegations.

"Two and a half days of military spend to save the lives of women and girls" Speaker referring to the cost of delivering MDG 5



SI briefing during CSW

One session was titled "Fulfilling the Promise of Gender Equality, Peace, and Development: Women, Peace and Security, Strengthening Institutional Mechanisms, World Economic Crisis, Building Women's Leadership and Millennium Development Goals"- the title was daunting but the information was extremely interesting. A highlight included a reading by Lynn Nottage from her Pulitzer Prize play "Ruined"; the story of a woman from the Congo whose baby was stamped on by soldiers followed by 5 months of continuous rape. She went back to her village when she escaped and was a pariah for "allowing herself to be raped." This will haunt me forever.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING



Trafficking is an issue that Soroptimists have embraced worldwide with Awareness, Advocacy and Action.

CSW 54 gave us an excellent opportunity to illustrate our work globally, nationally and locally, since 1995, when we presented three workshops to audiences from around the world. The journey our members have undertaken in facing this critical issue, started in 1995 with our International Quadrennial Project SIAM, through two President's Appeals and many different UN Events.

Interestingly, in 1995 the world community did not even acknowledge "trafficking" as an issue and only briefly mentioned it in the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action. In the presentations, audiences learned that SI has taken this topic on personally and locally, they illustrated a

myriad of projects; simple and replicable, complex and far reaching. The common denominator of all projects is that SI members learned about the topic and bravely did real work toward the issues of prevention and treatment where few other NGOs have gone in ways other than through fundraising.

CSW attendees commented that they were impressed with the diversity of projects, the number of countries we have worked in and the commitment of our members on large and small scales. In spite of the potential danger of working in the area of human trafficking, that some members have expressed, many Clubs have taken this issue on.

SI has recently produced a leaflet about trafficking which will soon be available on the SI Website.



NORTHWEST COALITION AGAINST TRAFFICKING

This coalition, founded by SI Northwestern Region, brings together agencies, political leaders, community organisations, individuals, media and business supporters working to Inform, Educate and Protect women and girls from Human Labour and Sex Trafficking in the Northwest Region of the USA.

Their conference, held in Portland, Oregon in January, also served as a fundraiser to create a trafficking shelter in Portland. Keynote speakers included SIA President Cathy Standiford and Bill Hillar, a former Special Forces Colonel, who lost his 17 year old daughter when she was kidnapped in 1988 in Asia and forced into the sex industry. Hillar was unable to save her. The recent movie *Taken*, starring Liam Neeson, is partially based on his story.

Jane Velez-Mitchell, host of *Issues* on HLN TV discussed violence against women. She was also presented with the Soroptimist Ruby Award, an SIA award which celebrates outstanding women who work to improve the lives of women and girls. Jane then invited President Cathy Standiford to be one of four guests on her national TV show that focused solely on the trafficking of women and girls. Soroptimist was mentioned numerous times in the programme.

Soroptimist Michelle Bart is one of the Conference leaders. Michelle helps SIA Clubs with their websites and with media releases. Now she is organising national media attention for our great organisation, Michelle is *Best for Women*.

She also, in her spare time, represents families of kidnapped children and provides investigative services and public relations support to help to keep their children's cases visible in local and national media outlets.

One of the major issues in a kidnapping is the child may have been trafficked, so NWCAT is where most of her time is being used, keeping us on the frontlines of another war against women! www.nwcat.org

STOP THE TRAFFIK

STOP THE TRAFFIK is a global movement against the trafficking of people. It has more than 1,000 member organisations in 50 countries and a grass roots following of ordinary activists around the world. The campaign is directly related to Objective 2 in the SI

Programme Focus 2007-2011: "End human trafficking and all forms of violence against women". The international office of the campaign is in the UK and the coalition includes many countries across the world, most of which have Soroptimist Clubs. www.stophetraffik.org



Winner of the SIGBI Best Practice Award in Human Rights & the Status of Women in 2008, SI Poole has been developing its Purple Teardrop Campaign against human trafficking and is now working in partnership with the Blue Blindfold Campaign and the UK Human Trafficking Centre (UKHTC).

As a result, SI now has representation on the UKHTC's National Prevention Advisory Group working alongside Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) other government agencies and.

The Purple Teardrop Campaign's objective is primarily to raise awareness among the general public about this modern form of

slavery, particularly that of sexual exploitation of women and girls and to raise funds for victims in safe houses. In excess of £10,000 has been raised and passed to charities specializing in victim care. Other objectives include making customers of the sex trade more aware of their contribution to this illegal trade, and to publicise a hotline number for the public to give confidential information on locations where they suspect that trafficked victims are being exploited. The Campaign has charity status in England and Wales.

Since its launch in 2008, the Campaign has developed a range of materials such as the

Purple Teardrop pin badge, posters, fact sheets and power point presentations which can be used by Soroptimist Clubs in their own Purple Teardrop campaigns. Several SI Clubs in the UK have chosen to support the Campaign and this is really making a difference and helping to take the Campaign forward.

Glynn Rankin (right), Director of Legal Services, UKHTC, spoke at the SIGBI Conference in Cardiff in October 2009, giving official approval to the Campaign to provide victim support and care.

Order forms for promotional materials can be downloaded from the website at www.purpleteardrop.org.uk.

Purple Teardrop





Alice Wells has been officially welcomed as President Elect, Soroptimist International. Alice, whose term started on February 1st received her President Elect badge from SI President Hanne Jensbo at the SI Board meeting on 15th February in London. Alice is Immediate Past President, SI of the Americas. A charter member of SI of the Kachinas, Inc., she has been actively involved with Soroptimism since 1980 starting off as Charter Vice-President of her new Club. Ask Alice about Soroptimism and why she loves it, she will tell you it's because of the friendships. "There is rarely a city you can visit without a Soroptimist connection. Yes, we all join for different reasons: service, networking, making a difference, etc., but we stay in Soroptimist International for the differences this outstanding organisation makes in OUR lives and the lives of women and girls in our local areas and throughout the world."

news from Rosie Coutts, SI HQ



A warm welcome to our new format for TIS, The International Soroptimist! At its August 2009 meeting in Denmark, the SI Board agreed to launch a new, quarterly digital version of the SI international magazine, starting in 2010. Consequently, December 2009 saw the last printed issue of the magazine.

The decision was due to many factors. Subscriptions, including postage, remained static for 15 years as the Board was anxious to make the magazine available to as many members as possible.

However, even with 15,000 copies translated into Japanese and 4,000 translated to French, and the sterling efforts of Carene Davis-Stitt as a deeply committed Editor, the magazine reached just one third of the worldwide membership.

Free & Online

It is our sincere hope that this new, free, online magazine will be accessible to many more Soroptimists around the world. Under the professional editorship of Sheila Manchester (already a

familiar face to SIGBI members as the excellent Editor of Soroptimist News), we aim to bring you up to the minute news on SI's representation at the United Nations centres, programme work and illustrations of inspirational Soroptimist projects from the four Federations as we all pursue the Soroptimist mission of transforming the lives of women and girls.

Above all, remember that this is your magazine – Sheila will be delighted to hear from you with any suggestions for articles or information that

work at international level.

We hope that you enjoy reading the digital TIS and that you will share it with members who may not have internet access. TIS can be downloaded as a PDF file – using Adobe Acrobat Reader, a free internet download – and TIS can then be printed off and photocopied.

Appointments

The new magazine was not the only development agreed by the SI Board. Following a long overdue renovation of the HQ building, which also provided more offices, we have appointed two new staff members. These appointments, with the increased resources that they represent, will greatly increase our capacity to provide professional service to the organisation.

Abigail Watson, a graduate of York University, joins as a part-time Finance Director. She is a qualified Chartered Accountant with 29 years' experience, including nine as a company director in Peterborough, UK where she had management responsibilities for a group of four companies. Prior to training as an accountant, Abigail has a long record of volunteer service, with 12 years as a School Governor. She is married, with two daughters. She is working closely with the SI Treasurer and Finance Chair and is already preparing a detailed budget for 2011.

Reilly Dempsey joins us as Programme Director. Reilly, an American national, holds a Bachelor in Fine Arts degree in non-profit management from Boston University; a Juris Doctorate in International Human Rights from New York University School of



Law (focusing on women's rights) and a Masters in Public Health from Columbia University. Reilly has experience in advocating for at risk groups at local, national and international fora. She completed a placement at the World Health Organisation in Geneva on a Human Rights Research Fellowship and worked at the Centre for the Study of

AIDS in South Africa. Reilly is currently based in London where she has been working as a Policy and Programme Manager with government and community organisations to improve access to services for vulnerable populations, with a focus on women. She is also a women's rights advisor to the Maternal, Newborn and Child Health Strategy Group. Reilly has co-authored a number of publications on human and reproductive rights.

Reilly's work at SI will centre on developing and implementing the new long term project that is to replace the international quadrennial project.

We are very much looking forward to Reilly joining us and to the strong support that her professional background in advocacy, research and project management will bring to SI Headquarters and the entire SI Programme team.

Best Practice

The SI Best Practice Awards are given each year to celebrate the difference Soroptimists have made to the lives of women and girls around the world. All projects on Programme Focus Objectives 5, 6 and 7 will be considered for the 2010 awards:

- Improve access to clean water, sanitation and essential food resources
- Mitigate the effects of climate change and integrate sustainability into personal choices and government policies and programmes
- Meet the needs of women and girls during and after armed conflicts and disasters.

Do make sure that you have reported all your projects in these areas and entered them on to the database. Your Federation Programme Director will check this for outstanding projects. There will be a winner for each Objective from each Federation with one overall winner. Certificates will be presented at the Interim Board Meeting August 2010.

I look forward to celebrating Soroptimist achievements in awareness, advocacy and action!

Margaret Cook International Assistant Programme Director



Earthquake in Haiti Support for a disaster-torn nation

photo: www.flickr.com/photos/unitednationsdevelopmentprogramme

The world was in shock after seeing the devastation that struck Haiti on 12th January 2010. The earthquake left more than 220,000 dead, thousands injured and one million homeless in a country already suffering from widespread poverty.

Fortunately, all members of Club Port-au-Prince Soroptimist International Of Europe (SI/E), survived unscathed, but some lost homes and/or businesses.

SI/E President Eliane Lagasse appealed to Soroptimists to donate to help their SI/E fellow members by donating to the Haiti Relief Fund set up on the SI/E website.

In addition to the support of many individuals, SIA donated US\$10,000 and SIGBI sent £2000 from its Emergency Relief Fund. SI/E Unions and Clubs initiated their

own appeals and their efforts were richly rewarded. Sadly, there is no way of calculating the exact amount collected because many Soroptimists donated directly to the partner relief organisations that were chosen by their Unions or to their Clubs, but the figure approaches €100,000.

The Dutch, French and German Unions – to name a few – have each set up accounts for donations or designated aid organisations to support. The Dutch Union collected €22,000 and the government doubled the amount to €44,000! The Belgian Union plans to make a donation from its reserves.

Many Clubs have also initiated their own campaigns. For example, Club Bad Schandau in Germany had collected more than €12,000 for a joint project

to be executed by the relief organisation arche noVa e.V., which sent a team from Germany to Haiti to provide temporary water supplies.

The SI/E Board has decided to support Club Bad Schandau and arche noVa in realising an ambitious project involving the installation of water systems, the construction of washrooms and sanitary facilities, hygiene education and the distribution of hygienic articles.

The Swiss Club Bad Ragaz has received donations of US\$20,000 and plans to invest in reconstructing a school in Haiti. These are just two examples of SI/E Club efforts to help.

Club Port-au-Prince will receive help from the SI/E fund to provide hygiene kits with soap, toothpaste, sanitary napkins etc. to help women in need. The members will also provide an orphanage outside Port-au-Prince with food. They are extremely grateful to their Soroptimist friends for their generosity.

It is clear that Haiti will require long-term assistance. If you would like to help, you may donate through PayPal on the SI/E website: www.soroptimisteurope.org. Every little bit is highly appreciated!



Soroptimist global charters

Congratulations to:

SI OF THE AMERICAS GOLDEN WEST REGION:

SI of Silver Lakes/
Helendale,
California, USA

JAPAN NISHI REGION:

SI of Kaikyo-Shimonoseki,
Japan

PHILIPPINES REGION:

SI of Boracay, Philippines
SI of Zaragoza, Philippines
SI of Tagaytay, Philippines

SIERRA NEVADA REGION:

SI of Rancho Cordova,
California, USA

SIERRA PACIFIC REGION:

SI By The Bay, California

TAIWAN REGION:

SI of Kaohsiung Bayu,
Taiwan

SI OF GREAT BRITAIN & IRELAND

SI Pune Metro East, India
SI Bombay Gateway, India
SI Hyderabad Central,
Pakistan
SI Onitsha Niger, Nigeria

SI OF EUROPE

Forthcoming charters:
SI of Schwyz, Switzerland
SI Rohrbacher Land,
Austria

to domestic violence or who already have had negative migration experience and are located by the project team and specialists involved in the project at local levels during its implementation.

Soroptimists can still help make "Hopes and dreams for everyone" come true by donating to the SI President 10th December appeal. If you would like to know more about the project, please contact Liv Handeland, at selma2@online.no

President's Appeal

"Hopes and dreams for everyone" is a counter-trafficking project in Moldova, chosen by SI President Hanne Jensbo for her 2009 10th December Appeal. SI Union of Norway has run this project for four years.

In the Republic of Moldova, the poorest country of Europe, nearly 38% of the population are under 24 years old.

The potential to achieve a positive future for the children and young people of Moldova is compromised by conditions and behaviour skills that undermine their physical, intellectual, emotional and social welfare.

The majority of the victims of trafficking are under 18. 10% had an institutional background before trafficking.

The main purpose of this project is to prevent human trafficking by providing life-skills education and sustainable living conditions

for vulnerable children from exposed regions and to support potential victims of trafficking and domestic violence and vulnerable people at-risk.

The 'Hopes and dreams for everyone' project aims to:

- Assist graduates from four boarding schools in Moldova (Vascauti and Napadova from Floresti region, Falesti, Cazanesti from Telenesti region) -
- Assist young people in continuing professional education;
- Assist potential victims of trafficking and of domestic violence from the selected regions of the project via the National Referral System (NRS) for potential victims of trafficking and of domestic violence,

Activities of the project, directed at fulfilling the above



mentioned objectives include:

- Training programmes for children from boarding schools: organising national seminars and local meetings with children,
- Assisting adolescents in continuing professional education through development of a life-skills programme that will prepare the beneficiaries to lead independent lives,
- Assisting potential victims of trafficking and domestic violence from the regions of the project. The project supports vulnerable young persons who are either in difficult situation and prone to accept hasty decisions to go abroad illegally, are subject

Partnerships

Partnership is becoming increasingly important for the development of projects in all SI Federations. Here we have four examples; if you have news of successful partnerships, email: editor@soroptimistinternational.org



SI OF DAMANSARA, MALAYSIA: JP Morgan

For six years SI of Damansara (SID) has had an ongoing partnership with JP Morgan Bank, running a Literacy Programme for nine homes for abandoned children and centres for underprivileged women and children. These are multi-ethnic

and multi-religious, run by volunteers who are themselves struggling for funds for basic necessities.

JP Morgan selected SID for sponsorship based on SID's award-winning reading programme at the Vocational Training Opportunity Centre for Women in Kuala Lumpur.

The Literacy programme has expanded and won a second SI Award. JP Morgan has continued its annual grant based on its confidence in the longterm benefits of education for women and girls and on the sustainability of the Programme. This monetary and training aid benefits 70 women and 400 children annually. Because of their deprived backgrounds, the children do not perform as well as they should academically. The programme bridges the gap in their education.

SID has received 6 grants from

JP Morgan Bank totalling USD 78,500/. The grant is kept in a separate fund and dispensed annually for the projects that include sponsorship or running of reading programmes, tuition classes, English language camps, speech craft courses, educational visits and a literary competition.

The results of this literacy programme are evidenced in students' improved grades. Homes report an improvement in the reading habits of the children. One girl said, "When I have a family of my own I will definitely have a home library."

SI OF EUROPE: WfWP

The alliance between SI/E and Women for Water Partnership (WfWP), has been vital for the success of many of SI/E's water and sanitation projects in connection with the biennium themes 'Soroptimists Go for Water' and now 'Safe Water for a Safe Life'.

WfWP is a network of women's organisations in South America, the Caribbean, Africa, Asia and Europe. In addition to building strategic alliances, the network's key concerns are empowerment, local ownership, equity mainstreaming, and grassroots development.

Based in The Hague in the Netherlands, uniting one million women from different

social, cultural and professional backgrounds, WfWP sees its main focus in sustainable water resource management by establishing this alliance. Since October 2007 SI/E and its Unions and Clubs have invested more than €1,000,000 in water and sanitation projects, many of which received financial backing from WfWP and its partners.

SI/E joined WfWP in 2007. In addition to financial support, WfWP has provided grants to improve internal and external Communication Infrastructure and to support Capacity Development. One grant was allocated to develop and maintain the 'Soroptimists Go for Water' website (www.soroptimistsgoforwater.nl). SI/E

also received grants for Dynamic Networking training and Sustainable Leadership training.

The co-operation also includes backing for participation in conferences and exchanges. Recently, Martina van Koten represented SI/E at the Asian Working Conference of WfWP in Sri Lanka, while Roswitha Ott, SI/E Project Manager Africa, and Suba Parthiban, SI/E Programme Officer, were invited to Suriname to learn about projects organised by the National Women's Movement of Suriname, another WfWP member organisation.

The partnership with WfWP has been a great opportunity for SI/E. As the water theme will extend through 2013, albeit



with different focal points, this alliance will no doubt continue to offer both organisations enormous benefits and many areas for synergies.

SI GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND: UNICEF

The SIGBI and UNICEF joint campaign aims to seek out new evidence to inform HIV prevention, empower adolescents to identify and respond to their own vulnerabilities, ensure that adolescents at risk are reached by HIV prevention, treatment, and support services and make sexual violence against women and girls socially unacceptable.

Girls in sub-Saharan Africa are disproportionately vulnerable to HIV infection. Gender-based discrimination and violence are significant barriers to access services and negatively impact individual ability to exercise self-protection choices.

In cultures where motherhood is a feminine ideal, working against it through the use of



barrier contraceptives or the negotiation of safe sex with partners on whom they are economically dependant leaves women at risk of violence or abandonment.

In 2008 there were 2,000,000 women aged 18-25 living with HIV and 850,000 young men.

While 45% of pregnant women living with HIV in low and middle-income countries received antiretroviral regimens to prevent transmission of the virus to their infants, compared with 24% in 2006 and 35% in 2007, loss of follow-up of mothers and children results in

otherwise preventable deaths and a massive loss in public health investment.

There has been an increase in knowledge by 10 percentage points among females aged 15-24 in 17 out of 45 countries and such knowledge has increased in young men in 7 out of 12 countries with similar trend data.

In several countries, there have been declines of 5 or more percentage points in risky behaviour such as the initiation of sex before the age of 15, sex with multiple partners and sex without condoms.

There is still much to be done and massive investment is required to reach the universal access goals.

Photo: UNICEF/NYHQ2009-0349/Nesbitt

Inspiration

Do you find projects sometimes re-invent the wheel?
Is another Club or country already doing what you are planning to do?
Sharing contacts, knowledge, plans makes sense! Share your great projects with others: email: editor@soroptimistinternational.org

SI GREAT BRITAIN & IRELAND: Because I am a Girl

Some Clubs in Britain are familiar with the work of Plan International through their sponsorship scheme. Plan is one of the largest child-centred community development organisations in the world, helping children and families in 48 of the poorest countries to break the cycle of poverty.

As part of its work, Plan UK is running a campaign called 'Because I am a Girl'. This aims to transform the lives of the world's poorest girls. Every

year from 2007 to 2015 they are producing a report that looks at the different ways girls around the world are affected by discrimination.

This campaign matches well with Programme Objective 9 so members are asked to support it. The campaign includes a petition to the British government to make sure girls benefit as much as boys from the aid money they give to developing countries and to do as much as possible to make sure girls around the world finish school. The campaign also

encourages us to sign a pledge calling on government leaders to fight for the rights of the world's most underprivileged girls to ensure they get a decent education and laws which protect their basic human rights.

In a bid to raise awareness and money, Plan UK have recently launched a book of stories by seven leading authors based on the 'Because I am a Girl' campaign. (ISBN 9780099535928)

The book contains moving and memorable stories that underline the need for us to



do all we can to enable girls to receive an education. In the forward to the book, Chief Executive of Plan UK Marie Staunton explains that the book was compiled to make vulnerable girls visible in a way that statistics cannot.

SI OF EUROPE: Mentoring

Supporting talented young women in management or inspiring to leadership positions is the objective of the Mentoring Programme introduced in Germany in 2003. In the three series so far, Soroptimists from the German Union have counselled 45 qualified young women from 250 applicants – with astounding results.

There have also been benefits for Extension, as a third of the participants have become Soroptimists. SI/E is now starting a European Mentoring Programme with Belgium, Luxembourg and Sweden joining the German Union.

In the mentoring relationship an experienced person (the mentor) provides advice for the personal and professional development of a young professional (the mentee). Promising managers often acquire a mentor at work, but with a lack of women in top



positions, women may be unable to find role models.

The German Union's Mentoring Programme offers this relationship outside the work environment. Mentors are Soroptimists with different qualifications and backgrounds.

The concept is based on the experience of the partner organisation, EAF (the German acronym for European Academy for Women in Politics and Business). It combines a nine

month mentoring phase with seminars and management training, organised by EAF.

The mentors also take part in workshops to prepare them.

The Programme is advertised in various media targeting younger people. Most mentees had a university degree, and some already had a family. The average age has been 32. English is a prerequisite.

A first selection is made from the written applications. Then candidates are interviewed and participate in a group exercise. Each individual is evaluated on: resolve, willingness to assume management responsibility, communication skills, social commitment and personal circumstances. Although Soroptimists, their daughters and friends have applied for the programme, participants are chosen solely on qualifications.

For the pilot project of the European Federation, the number of participants will vary

for each country. A mentee is matched to a mentor on the basis of the profile and preferences provided by the applicants and on the mentee's assessment. Personality, proximity and similarities in profession or expertise are crucial for the choice of mentor. The 'chemistry' is significant as the personal conversations and meetings between mentee and mentor are an integral part of the experience.

The search for applicants for the SI/E Mentoring Programme 2010-2011 will begin in April 2010 and the programme will extend until July 2011. The expanded structure offers participants the chance to meet an even larger network of professional women and a wider cultural perspective.

The concept is also perfectly in line with SI Programme Focus Objective 10: Assure women's advancement in management, politics and decision-making.

SI SOUTH WEST PACIFIC: Supporting migrants

SI Townsville, in the Region of North Queensland's project is 'Meeting the needs of women and girls during and after armed conflict and disasters'.

The Club partnered with the Migrant Resource Centre to contact refugee and migrant families who arrive in Townsville on a regular basis so that they could offer support and help them settle in to their new surroundings.

The families arrive with very few possessions and can

not speak much English. SI Townsville members wanted to help them by offering a range of skills and knowledge of the community. It was important for them to be able to interact with the mainstream Australians who would exercise patience, tolerance and understanding of the various backgrounds and situations.

Members have also donated numbers of household items, furniture, electrical goods and linen to make their home life

more comfortable. A session to bake a cake and practise English proved very successful as did an earlier shopping trip to a second-hand store to buy cake tins.

The son of one Somali family fell and broke his leg just a few weeks after arriving in Townsville and so he could get to school and both his parents attend English classes, members filled a roster to do the transport run to and from school.

It is planned to continue this project working with the



Multicultural Support Group which provides 'hands on' support for the women and children.



Project Sierra: a project to be proud of!

In January nine Soroptimists crossed the world to visit Project Sierra. The experience was profound! Their report illustrates the project's value and inspires more activity. Margaret Cook says: "Jo and Kirsty from Hope and Homes helped us appreciate life in one

of the world's poorest countries. Alison Sutherland, SI Project Liaison (a Sierra Leone resident) was a wonderful source of information. Our lives were changed by this visit and by sharing just a few or our highlights with you, we – Alice, Cathy, Wilma, Evelyn, Liz, Anne, Gina,

Chris and Margaret hope to convey a little to you just how important it is that Project Sierra succeeds in changing the lives of so many women and girls in Sierra Leone. They have so little, WE can make the difference for them and the future of this beautiful country".

"Our trip featured 'first class' tickets on the rusting ferry – we were upstairs! Singing and dancing, heroes of the civil war who saved orphans from behind rebel lines, Christians and Muslims saying each other's prayers and road safety signs featuring slogans 'Love thy neighbour, but not while driving!' This co-exists with desperate poverty."

"Beautiful Sierra Leone – we have it so easy in comparison to the women there! With all the hardships they endure every day, I was in awe of their spirit. They aren't looking for a handout, but are so appreciative of any assistance. At a village meeting in Tambakha, we were told that HANCI is the only NGO they will work with. Girls get an education, gain life skills; women's lives are transformed. The HANCI staff - all from Sierra Leone - know the girls' needs. 100 per cent of Soroptimist money is going to help these young women."

"The thing that inspired me was the care taken by HANCI and Hope and Homes for Children to collaborate with communities; they assess needs, listen to the people and develop programmes to respond to identified needs. We deserve to be proud of this partnership."



"My highlight was the Kissy project, the girls had a real spark in their songs and speeches about the programme. They epitomised the necessity for investment in youth; they have the skills and self-belief to run with these opportunities."

"My happiest memory is the amazing "welcomes" received at SI projects and from local people. Sierra Leone may lack basic infrastructure, many people live below the poverty line, but their generosity and determination to build a better life highlights how they value our interest."

"It is difficult to explain the emotions – they thanked us for our support but I wanted to thank them for their smiles and kindness. Eight years after a terrible war, children are the first challenge for a better future. Life is improving for women with education and help from organisations like SI and HANCI. They help people - not giving them a fish but giving them a fishing rod!"

"What a privilege to experience the colour, sound and excitement of the welcome ceremony at Bo. Smiling girls chanted, sang

and danced to the beat of drums as we progressed from the gate of the compound to the training centre. After a delicious lunch prepared by the catering class, the girls showed off their skills: tailoring, hairdressing, tie-dyeing – and manicure! They work hard to take advantage of the opportunities offered by Project Sierra."

"Hanna is an 18 year old mother in Bo. She became pregnant; her parents asked her to leave. She lived on the street and gave birth to her son. Hanna still wanted to attend school but her parents refused to help. Learning about HANCI from a friend on the programme, she managed to enrol to study catering. She was reunited with her parents and after training she worked in a hotel and graduated with a Certificate of Merit in Catering and Hotel Management and a start up kit to set up a business selling cooking items from a stall, she hopes to have a small restaurant. Hanna told 2 young unsupported mothers about HANCI and both are now in the Teenage Mothers Programme."

